

Durham University Admissions Policy

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Introduction

Scope

This policy applies to all applications for undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT), postgraduate research (PGR), PGCE, and Foundation courses at Durham University. This includes UG and PGT courses run by Cranmer Hall. This policy is intended to provide guidance to university staff, applicants, parents, guardians, and advisors on the University's procedures relating to the admittance of students.

Courses run by [Durham University International Study Centre \(DUISC\)](#) are not covered under this policy.

Principles

Durham University welcomes students from all backgrounds. It is committed to recruiting talented students globally by identifying merit and potential through a fair, transparent, and inclusive admissions process. This policy ensures equal opportunity for all individuals, fostering a diverse and inclusive student body.

Durham University's Admissions Policy is aligned with the [University's Strategic Plan \(2017-27\)](#), the University's [Access and Participation Plan](#), and all relevant legal and regulatory requirements. The University adheres to the UCAS Business Rules (for UG and Foundation courses) along with the [Agent Quality Framework \(AQF\)](#), and recognised good practice in fair admissions to Higher Education, according to the [UUK Fair Admissions Code of Practice](#).

When an applicant or enquirer engages with the University, certain information and data will be collected and stored in line with data protection legislation. Our [Privacy Notice for Student Applicants and Potential Student Applicants](#) outlines why we collect this data, how it will be used and who it will be shared with.

Policy review and monitoring

This policy is the responsibility of the Head of Admissions. It is reviewed annually and ratified by Education Committee (responsible for ensuring compliance of policies with University standards).

University roles and responsibilities

The Student Recruitment and Admissions office (SRA), academic departments, schools and faculties, and other key areas of the University, work collaboratively to ensure the delivery of a fair, effective and professional admissions service.

Target numbers for admissions are determined through the University's Integrated Planning Process.

Responsibilities of the Student Recruitment and Admissions service include:

- ensuring the Admissions policy and associated policies and procedures are maintained and implemented effectively and consistently across the Admissions cycle.

- handling all enquiries relating to the recruitment and admission of applicants, providing expert information, advice and guidance, to promote the University, its departments and its courses.
- assessing applications against agreed entry criteria (academic level required for entry) in order to accomplish fair and consistent decision-making across all courses (excluding PGR).
- set and review selection criteria (assessment criteria for considering applications in competition) and offer targets, ensuring that they strategically align with agreed student intake targets, in collaboration with departments and faculties.
- undertaking assessments of fee status and delivery of CAS for visa purposes.
- assessing applicant qualifications against the terms of their offer, including identification of potential fraud/plagiarism for further investigation.
- managing the organisation of A-Level results day and Clearing (if required) for undergraduate courses.
- finalising applications to ensure that students can successfully progress to enrol on their course.
- monitoring admissions data and identifying any areas of concern and action required in consultation with relevant departments, including providing feedback on future targets.
- monitoring admissions and recruitment activity and providing accurate and timely statistical and management information to the University.
- using various recruitment tools, activities and materials to promote the University and its courses.

Academic departments and Faculties are responsible for:

- developing and reviewing their portfolio of courses to ensure that wherever possible, courses appeal to a diverse range of applicants.
- reviewing and proposing entry criteria to Education Committee, in consultation with Student Recruitment & Admissions, and in the context of relevant policies.
- assessing PGR applications and making decisions on applicants.
- ensuring that any departmental developments or constraints that affect admissions to courses are identified and communicated effectively, and within agreed timeframes, to Student Recruitment & Admissions and relevant stakeholders as applicable.
- participating in recruitment events, including representing departments at open days and post offer visit days.
- providing welcome and induction information to help facilitate the enrolment of new students.
- developing and delivering conversion activity.

[Responsibilities of applicants and students](#)

Durham University seeks to provide a respectful and inclusive environment where all staff and students can thrive.

In line with our obligations under the [Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Act 2023](#), Durham University upholds the right of applicants to express lawful opinions, including controversial or unpopular views.

We do not assess admissions based on ideology, political affiliation, or other protected expression. Where concerns arise about prior speech, these will only affect an application where they meet legal thresholds for harm, misconduct, or risk, and any decisions will be taken proportionately, transparently, and in line with our freedom of speech duties.

However, applicants are expected to uphold the values and behaviours outlined in our [Equality Diversity and Inclusion policy](#) and [Student Conduct policy](#). The University reserves the right to withdraw an application or offer of admission if it discovers an applicant displaying behaviours that contravene this policy. Such behaviour or language used could be deemed inappropriate whether expressed verbally, in writing or on social media.

Training and support

The University adheres to all relevant legal and regulatory requirements along with recognised good practice in fair admissions to Higher Education. All admissions decisions are made by those equipped to make the required judgements and competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

How to apply

Undergraduate courses and Foundation courses for UK students: Should be submitted via UCAS and received by the Equal Consideration Date (defined annually by UCAS). Where additional places are available, some courses may recruit beyond this deadline, through UCAS Extra and/or Clearing. Once submitted, applicants will receive access to the Durham Undergraduate [Applicant Portal](#). Applicants will receive updates to their application through their UCAS Hub.

Undergraduate and Foundation courses have one annual start date in September of each year.

Postgraduate taught/research courses: Applications are made directly to the University via our online application form, on the [Durham Postgraduate Applicant Portal](#). Specific course deadlines will be advertised in advance on the relevant course pages. Applicants are expected to check their applicant portal regularly for notifications and action requests.

Postgraduate taught courses typically have one annual start date in September of each year.

Applicants to postgraduate research degrees apply directly via the portal but are strongly advised to contact the Department first to discuss their application.

Postgraduate research courses have three annual start dates, October, January and April each year.

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE): Applications must come through the [DfE Apply Portal](#). All decisions will be communicated via this portal.

PGCE courses have one annual start date in September of each year.

Entry Requirements

Academic entry requirements for all courses are advertised on the University [course pages](#). Published entry criteria cover a wide range of qualifications, however if an applicant is unsure whether their profile meets the criteria, they should seek further guidance from the Admissions teams via our [Ask Us](#) form.

Foundation courses for UK students only: Foundation courses represent the ‘year 0’ element of an undergraduate degree programme. Courses are designed for students from under-represented groups, who have the potential to achieve the standard for admission to Durham, but who, as a result of educational disadvantage or disruption, do not meet the requirements needed for admission to Year 1 of an undergraduate degree.

Full details of the [eligibility criteria](#) for these courses is available via the Durham Centre for Academic Excellence (DCAD) webpages.

Certain progression routes from the Foundation Year may have essential and/or desirable entry criteria, whilst some progressing departments may also require admissions tests (e.g. LNAT for Law and ABRSM for Music).

English Language requirements

All applicants must provide evidence of their ability in spoken and written English, if they are not from a Durham University [recognised English speaking country](#). The University accepts a number of tests and qualifications as evidence of meeting its [English Language requirements](#). Where more than one piece of evidence of English Language proficiency is provided on an application, the University reserves the right to only consider the most recent evidence obtained.

If an applicant misses the English Language requirement, they may become eligible to undertake a Pre-sessional Academic English course, in which case the results from this course would then be used as evidence to satisfy the English Language requirement. The Admissions teams will signpost applicants to our [pre-sessional courses](#) and will assess eligibility for these courses based on the results of an applicant’s latest English Language Test.

Non-academic requirements

Courses that include a work placement as part of required learning will require additional checks such as DBS and/or Fitness to Teach. Failure to complete these checks satisfactorily may result in withdrawal from the course.

Selection principles

Durham University is committed to recruiting the best students for the courses that we offer, irrespective of background.

Applications will therefore be assessed individually, considering the wider context of an applicant as well as some/all of the following information supplied on their application:

- Performance in achieved or partially completed qualifications
- Predicted performance in qualifications yet to be achieved
- Personal statement*
- Reference/s
- LNAT score & essay (applicants to UG Law only)
- [TMUA or STEP score](#) (applicants to UG Maths only)

*Personal statements are given consideration alongside other listed criteria. However, for some highly selective courses more weight may be given to personal statements as part of the selection criteria.

In addition, some courses may require applicants to participate in an interview, submit examples of written work, compositions, or sound/video files of performance as part of the selection process. Further information is provided on relevant course pages.

For postgraduate research courses, an application will only be considered where a suitably qualified supervisory team and appropriate academic facilities are available. All international applications must be received at least 6 weeks before, and Home applications received at least 3 weeks before the agreed start date.

Achievement or predicted achievement of the required qualifications for a course, does not guarantee an offer of a place.

Contextual offers (UG courses only)

The University receives a range of contextual information about an applicant including educational, geodemographic and socio-economic background data, such as data about an applicant's home postcode.

This information allows assessors to consider an applicant's qualifications in light of their socioeconomic circumstances, ensuring that the potential of applicants is not overlooked. Contextual reduced offers can be made to applicants who meet our [fair access criteria](#).

To be eligible for a contextual offer an applicant must:

- Be eligible for Free School Meals*

Or meet two (or more) of the following criteria:

- Their home address postcode is classified as POLAR4 Quintile 1 or 2
- Their home address postcode is classified as ACORN 5 or 6
- Their current or most recently attended school is classified as a UK state school
- They are care experienced**
- They are an estranged student ***

*Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility: Applicants who have been identified by UCAS as eligible for Free School Meals, determined by UK Government sources and the Independent Schools Council.

**Care experienced: An applicant who, at any stage of their life, and for any length of time, has been in care e.g. looked after by the local authority.

***Estranged student: An applicant who has been assessed as estranged by Student Finance England (or equivalent in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales). An applicant will be assessed as estranged if:

- they have not communicated with their parents for at least one year before the beginning of the academic year
- they can demonstrate that they are permanently estranged from their parents
- they are under 25

The personal statement and reference are also important, and applicants will still need to meet any other admissions requirements needed by the course to be considered.

Contextual offers are only available to applicants classified as home for the purposes of tuition fees and eligibility for a contextual offer does not guarantee an offer.

Applicants with caring responsibilities are not part of the eligibility criteria under this scheme. However, such applicants are advised to ask their referee to include this information within the 'Extenuating Circumstances' section of the reference.

[Additional support](#) is available at Durham for undergraduate care-experienced students, care leavers, estranged students and other young independent students (EaCE+ students).

[Widening Access \(UG courses only\)](#)

The University offers a number of schemes aimed at preparing and encouraging gifted applicants from underrepresented groups to apply and enrol at Durham. Eligible applicants who successfully complete one of these schemes will receive a guaranteed standard offer (or in some cases a guaranteed reduced offer) on their chosen course. The following are an example of the currently offered schemes but these may be subject to change:

- [Supported Progression](#)
- [Sutton Trust Summer School](#)
- [Space to Explore Potential \(STEP\)](#)
- [Futures in STEM \(formerly known as Levelling up: Aspire Higher\)](#) - for applicants looking to apply for Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Maths or Physics

[Extenuating circumstances](#)

If an applicant has experienced extenuating circumstances affecting their ability to study or performance in their prior exams, they can include this information in their application form and it will be considered at the point a decision is made. For undergraduate and foundation applicants, this would usually be included in the "Extenuating Circumstances" section of the reference.

Reduced offers may be issued at the discretion of the decision-maker. For postgraduate taught and postgraduate research applicants, details can be included in the Personal Statement.

If an applicant experiences extenuating circumstances after they have submitted their application and/or which may affect the outcome of their examinations, they should in the first instance ensure that their school/college/provider reports these to the exam board. Exam boards are best placed in these instances to assess the impact this will have had on an applicant's final grade.

For instances where reporting to the exam board is not possible or appropriate, applicants can complete our [Mitigating Circumstances form](#) which will be considered alongside their results, when these are received. Completion of this form will not affect the initial decision made on the application, nor will it guarantee acceptance of an application as this will still depend on the grades

achieved and the availability of places on the course. Extenuating circumstance received after the advertised deadline, will not be taken into account.

Deferred entry

Applications for deferred entry, made either at the point of application or requested during the admissions cycle, will be considered at the University's discretion, but are not guaranteed. If granted, deferrals are usually for one year only, except in exceptional circumstances, for example for medical reasons.

Year 2 entry and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

Applications for undergraduate Year 2 entry should be submitted via UCAS in the normal way. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, dependent on the modules studied elsewhere, the grades obtained and whether the learning outcomes meet the pre-requisites for the relevant course at Durham. Applicants for Year 2 entry are also expected to have achieved the Year 1 entry requirements for their chosen course.

Course transfers requests from Year 1 current students at Durham should be dealt with and processed internally within the University. If a current Durham student applies via UCAS for transfer into Year 1 or Year 2, their application will be rejected.

Further information regarding [Year 2 entry and Accreditation of Prior Learning \(APL\)](#) can be found on our website or in the relevant [Undergraduate](#) and [Postgraduate](#) matriculation regulations.

Confirmation of Results

Once an applicant receives their results, these should be sent to the University for consideration, via the [PG Applicant portal](#) (for postgraduate taught and postgraduate research courses) or via [Ask Us](#) (for undergraduate and foundation courses).

If all the conditions of an applicant's offer are fully satisfied, then a place is guaranteed for the applicant on their chosen course. If any of the academic or English language conditions of the offer are missed, then the decision to accept or reject the applicant remains at the discretion of the University. In some instances where the academic conditions of an offer have not been met, Admissions experts may decide to offer a change of course to a similar programme where the applicant meets the entry criteria and there is space available.

If an applicant does not meet the English language conditions of their offer they may be offered the opportunity to complete a [Pre-sessional English Language course](#), prior to the start of their main programme.

Re-marks (UG only)

If an applicant does not meet the conditions of their offer and decides to request an [appeal or remark](#) from their exam board, they will be re-considered if, as a result of the re-mark, they then meet their offer conditions. Where possible a place on the applicants chosen course and year of

entry will be re-instated. However, this is not guaranteed and, in some instances due to place availability, a confirmed place for deferred entry will be issued instead.

Evidence received by 3rd September: If a successful remark means that the applicant subsequently meets their offer conditions, their offer will be re-instated (subject to available places). If no places are available on the course, applicants will be offered a deferred place for the following year.

Evidence received after 3rd September: If a successful remark means that the applicant subsequently meets their offer conditions, it is likely that an offer of a deferred place on the course will be issued.

Disability

The University is committed to considering all applications equally, in accordance with our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy](#). Applicants who consider themselves to have a disability can disclose this to the University on their application or at any time during the admissions process. Early disclosure will enable any reasonable adjustments to be planned in a timely manner, ensuring that applicants receive the necessary support from the outset of their studies.

Decisions on applications are made solely on academic grounds and completely independently of any discussions applicants have with [Disability Support](#).

Some courses, for example Primary Education, PGCE, and Social Work, require fitness to practice as a compulsory professional condition of enrolment. Such cases will be addressed on an individual basis and discussed with the applicant to find solutions and/or alternative programmes.

College membership

Once an offer of admission has been made, offer holders will be contacted by the College Membership and Allocation Office regarding College membership. The College membership process is separate from, and does not influence, whether to offer a place to study at Durham University. All enrolled students will be a member of a college.

Fee status and assessment

An applicant's fee status (Home or Overseas) will determine how much tuition fee they are required to pay. Fee status criteria are set out in regulations and guidance published by the Home Office.

The Postgraduate and Undergraduate Admissions teams are responsible for assessing fee status for applicants in accordance with advice and guidance published by the [UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](#). Applicants are required to provide information about their nationality and residential status in their application, which is then used to help determine their fee status.

The University's decisions on fee status are made independently from other institutions (for example Student Finance England, other universities, or research councils). It is therefore possible for an applicant to receive different fee outcomes from other institutions. Decisions surrounding fee status made at other institutions will not influence any decision made at Durham.

A decision on fee status will be made at the point of offer and will be communicated to applicants in their offer letter and via the applicant portal. If an applicant's status is not clear they may be asked to complete a full fee assessment form, before a decision can be made. Applicants who do not complete and return their fee assessment form by the required date, may be classified as overseas, and a decision processed on that basis. If an applicant sends in information after this point and their fee status subsequently changes to home, a place will only be offered if any remain available. Where places are not available a deferred place may be offered for the following year.

Applicants have the right to appeal if they believe their fee status to be incorrect, but this must be requested no later than 31 July in the year of application. For any offers made after 31 July, an appeal must be submitted by 31 August (deadlines do not apply to PGR applicants). By accepting our offer of admission and enrolling on the course, applicants are accepting the University's decision in relation to fee status, unless an appeal is already underway.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Assistant Admissions Manager (Fee Status and Compliance) at feestatus.admissions@durham.ac.uk. All appeals will be considered by a panel of at least three experienced staff members, who were not previously involved in the original decision.

The Panel will only accept a submission from the applicant themselves and will only reply to the applicant directly, unless written consent is given from the applicant to communicate with a third party, for example, a parent or legal representative. The Panel's decision will be made within the legal framework of the Education (Fees and Awards) (England) 2007 Regulations, as amended, and the Higher Education (Fee Limit Condition) (England) Regulations 2017, as amended.

The panel will make one of two decisions: Home or Overseas. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the applicant by email within fifteen working days wherever possible. The panel decision is final.

The fee status decision will apply for the entire duration of study. A current student's fee status can only be reviewed if there has been a change in circumstances after the start of their course, which they believe may make them eligible for Home fees under UKCISA guidelines. It is extremely rare that this will lead to a change in fee status.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions

As part of Durham's duty of care to our students and staff, we ask applicants who have received and accepted an offer with us to disclose any relevant unspent criminal convictions.

Information relating to criminal convictions will not affect the academic assessment of an application and is not shared with assessors. Further information about what information we collect and what we do with it can be found on our dedicated [Criminal Convictions](#) webpage.

Failure to declare a relevant unspent criminal conviction may result in an applicant being withdrawn from their course and the UKVI being informed (where a student visa has been issued), as stated in the [Admissions Regulations](#).

ATAS

In order to avoid the proliferation of potentially dangerous technologies, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) runs an [Academic Technology Approval Scheme](#). This scheme is compulsory for overseas applicants from outside the EU and approval by the FCO under the terms of the scheme is a requirement for entry to a number of courses. If ATAS clearance is required for a course, applicants will not be able to enrol until this requirement is satisfied.

Deposits

The University reserves the right to charge a tuition fee deposit.

All postgraduate taught courses require international applicants to pay a deposit towards their tuition fees, once they are holding an unconditional offer at Durham.

No deposit is required for Home postgraduate taught applicants, undergraduate, foundation, or PGCE applicants.

When applicants pay their tuition fee deposit, there is a 14 day "cooling off" period in which to cancel their contract with the University and receive a full refund, provided that no visa application has been submitted. After this period, the University is unable to refund tuition fee deposits under any circumstances, except where a visa application has been refused (official documentation confirming the visa refusal will be required). Refund requests must be submitted via the Applicant Portal alongside all required evidence.

Applicants completing our pre-sessional English Language courses will be required to pay a deposit for their main programme, prior to a single or combined confirmation of acceptances of studies (CAS) being issued. If an applicant does not pass the pre-sessional programme, a deposit refund will not be granted.

In the event that the University revokes an application based on fraud, any deposit paid up to that point will also not be eligible for a refund.

Where a deposit refund is granted, the University will retain £200 to cover administration costs.

Course amendments and withdrawals

Our [Student Protection Plan](#) provides transparent and accessible information on the action the University will take in the event of substantial course change or the withdrawal of a course following the receipt of applications.

Fraud, omission and plagiarism

All applicants and registered students are required to disclose to the University all academic and personal information material to an application made by the applicant or in their name and to their matriculation and registration. Applicants and matriculated and/or registered students, and those acting in their name, also have a continuous obligation to notify the University of changes in their circumstances.

For applications received through UCAS (Foundation and Undergraduate courses), these will be subject to UCAS rules and procedures concerning fraudulent applications. Applicants suspected of providing or omitting, or found to have provided or omitted, false information will be referred to UCAS. Applications identified by UCAS's Similarity Detection software to contain plagiarised material will be considered on an individual basis by Admissions staff, taking into account the nature, relevance and importance of the plagiarism.

The University reserves the right to cancel an application or withdraw an offer in the following instances:

- an applicant has been proven to have cheated, been disqualified, used proxy testing or software of any kind to assist their performance in an assessment or test environment
- an applicant is found to have provided false, plagiarised or misleading information or documentation of any description, including but not limited to offer letters, academic transcripts and certificates, translations, medical documentation including death certificates, English Language transcripts and certificates, as stated in the [Admissions regulations](#).

If a fraud is not identified until after an applicant has enrolled on their course, this may result in the applicant being withdrawn from their course and the UKVI being informed (where a student visa has been issued).

Feedback

Admissions staff are required to record the reasons for unsuccessful admissions decisions.

For foundation and undergraduate applications, reasons for rejection will be provided for all unsuccessful applications via the UCAS Hub.

For postgraduate taught and postgraduate research courses, feedback will be provided via the Applicant Portal.

Feedback for PGCE applications will be sent via DfE Apply alongside an unsuccessful decision .

Complaints and Appeals

Complaints should be submitted in writing. A complaint is defined as a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies.

Complaints on any other grounds or dealing with processes or decisions not linked to an application or admission to the University will not be accepted under this policy.

Requests by an unsuccessful applicant for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision, with an aim of overturning or changing that decision, will not be considered.

Applicants will not be discriminated against in any further application should they request feedback or make a complaint under the University's policies and procedures.

Please visit our website for more information about the University's [complaints policy and procedures](#).

Related policy documents

- [Notification of Academic and Personal details for Admission, Matriculation and Registration purposes](#)
- [Regulations for Undergraduate Matriculation \(including Accreditation of Prior Learning – APL\)](#)
- [Regulations for Postgraduate Matriculation \(including Accreditation of Prior Learning – APL\)](#)
- [Policy for applicants under 18](#)
- [Student Protection Plan](#)
- [Statutes and Regulations](#)
- [Data Protection and Student Privacy Notice](#) (undergraduate)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct](#)